

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, December 8. 1691.

We have receiv'd several Rebukes from some stoical Gentlemen, who we guess very old, as we are sure they are very ill-natur'd, on the account of this poor Love-paper, which it seems those grave Dons are very angry with, as well as at us for looth, for troubling them and the World with such frivolous matters, or taking any notice of the impertinencies of Women, as they are pleas'd to call 'em, with some of whom we have formerly discours'd, and shall e'ne let the rest of 'em alone to mind their Sore-legs and Spectacles, and think it a very Natural, as well as innocent attempt in us, by this paper to please the Young and Fair, and render the Ladies at least propitious to that, if not to its Authors, being very well satisfied that our Enemies and theirs are the same; for which reason we hope we may by way of Pre. we bespeak their continu'd Favour, and Patronage, as we have hitherto found it. And that we mayn't seem altogether unworthy on't, we protest in their defence, as well as our own, that we have receiv'd Questions of as great weight and concern from their Sex, as from any of ours; nay some which we must acknowledge have carry'd so much difficulty in 'em, that we have been hard put to't to answer 'em even to our own satisfaction, and wish we may be able to do it so as to please others. Among several of this Nature, we had sometime since sent us these that follow, with a Letter to this purpose.

Quest. 1. **A** Lady not learned, but having Children, and being desirous her self to enter 'em early into the knowledge of things, desires the Athenian Society to answer these following Queries for her resolution therein?

1. What Heads of things is it best to enter Children in, when they begin to Learn?
2. What particular Branches or Members under those several Heads.
3. Which is the best way of referring what they meet with in their observation or reading to those Heads which they have been before instructed in?

Ans. We answer, first in general, if the Lady has many Children, or a large Family, she'll find her Domestick Affairs will employ too much of her time to give her Liberty either to instruct her Children her self, or fit her self for it; both of which is the work of a Tutor who must mind nothing else. — Not but that a Mother, if a prudent well temper'd and Ingenious Woman, had she no other business, and were she otherwise capable of it; might, we believe, do much more on her own Children than any other, as being better acquainted with their Tempers and Dispositions, and having nothing of that Magisterial frownish which sticks so close to most Pedagogues, and frights more Learning out of Children than e're they can whip into 'em: And after all, are apt to confine their care to words only, letting things alone for others: whence we may observe, without any reflection on those of 'em who don't deserve that character, that they are generally of a trifling Genius, and unsound Judgments. After this we come to the particular resolution of the several Questions.

To the first, What Heads of things 'tis fittest to enter Children in, when they first begin to Learn — (We suppose 'em of Quality, and answer accordingly) That they ought in the first place, as all Christians acknowledge, to be instructed in Divinity; but neither this, nor any that follow, to take up their whole Time, which wou'd soon tire and make 'em nauseate it; but to have diversity of Studies, now one, and then another, th's in none to overload 'em. And therein to be sure at the very first, as soon as they can understand any thing, to make 'em have just thoughts of God, whom they shou'd be accordingly taught to believe the most Good, most amiable Being, the Father of all things,

who loves them better than their Natural Parents, and who gives 'em all they have or are to hope for, and who sees all their actions, and if good will certainly reward 'em, as well as punish 'em if evil. Possess 'em well with this at first, and if you can but be so happy to make 'em Love God, 'twill be a firm Foundation for all the rest, since that Ingenuous principle will make 'em do all they possibly can, which they are told will please him, and delight in doing it; they ought indeed to know he's just too, and will punish those who do evil: But this ought not to be all, nor we think, to be principally taught 'em, because it only renders 'em slavishly fearful, and lays a foundation for Superstition, whence they easily run into Irreligion, the Extreams being nearer each other in every thing than the middles are, how great a Riddle soever that may seem to be. After this, all the Principles of our Religion are to be taught 'em, but all sweetly and mildly, as if their happiness was really design'd therein. — And after they have learnt the very first necessary things to be known, their Vow in Baptism is to be carefully taught 'em, and the nature of their obligation therein. But we find we are insensibly fall'n from the first Question to the second, and from General Heads of things to particular Branches: However, that method being most natural, we shall still continue it in what remains: Nor will any sure fault us for placing Divinity first in our Education of Youth, or insisting so largely on it; because, as has been said, tho' really the Foundation of all the rest, its too commonly neglected, tho' a thing the most becoming a Gentleman of any in the World, as Children shou'd be carefully instructed. Thence 'twou'd be convenient to enter 'em in *Ethicks*, or the Study of Morality, or Manners, still showing 'em how that, as well as all the rest, depends on Divinity. We pretend not to lay down Systems in this, or any of the other, but shall only touch at some of the chief Heads; and the first thing they ought to be taught here, is to Honour their Parents, that is, to fear and love 'em, as being in the Place of God; which unless they do, you'll hardly e're make 'em good Scholars. The next, to love their Prince, who is their Political Parent, and their Countrey, as a larger Family, and more remote Brethren, at the same time inculcating that great principle of Morality, *Doing to others as they'd be done to*. Next to this we think *Heraldry* very convenient, which we have had experience that Children will soon learn; and which is a very genteel Study: — we mean not out of *Guillem*, or other Voluminous Treatises, which they'll have time enough to consult afterwards; but by those very useful compendious Tables published for that purpose, where they'll learn what most concerns 'em, the Names and Arms of most of the English Families: And at the same time they are to be taught, that these are the Tokens and Rewards of Valour and Virtue, and were given by Princes to the Ancestors of those Families for defending their Countrey, or some Noble exploit. Accordingly they are to be learnt early to despise Death in a good Cause, and well settled in the Notion of true Honour: Both which they'll learn from good History, when they come to read it, which we look upon to be too voluminous a Study for their Mothers to instruct 'em in; only they shou'd be careful to let 'em begin with such Historians as give fair Characters of Virtue and Honour, especially *Plutarch's Lives*, (as lately translated) and this we think even before our own English Histories, concerning which we intend a particular Discourse, having some Questions from another hand, relating to it, and which are yet very lame notwithstanding all our Chroniclers. And these we think enough for a Lady to teach her Children: Since as for *Physicks*, all that's worth knowing there depends on Experiment; and for *Mathematicks*, they require a riper Age and Judgment. As for *Dancing*, *Musick*, &c. tho'

one necessary, and a little o' t'other convenient, yet because they rather relate to the forming the Body than Mind, wee'l only thus mention 'em; and for Poetry, they'll e'ne take to that fast enough of themselves without teaching, unless 'twere more virtuous than generally 'tis.

For the third Question; Which is the best way to refresh what they meet with in their observation or Reading to those General Heads: We answer, there are but two ways for 't that we know of, either by common placing or else by the strength of Memory. The first tho' 'tis more sure, yet is too tedious for persons that are very young: And besides their Judgments are hardly ripe enough for such an exercise, but heavy work at best, and more fit for a Dutch Commentator, than the livelier Genius of a Gentleman. We therefore think it better they shou'd only rank what they meet with worth preserving under some of those General Heads wherein they have been before instructed, by the help of their Memory, which will both strengthen and increase it every day, and make them much more masters of their Notions than if they only lay dead in writing. And thus much in answer to these three Noble Questions: wherein if we han't done right to the Subject, we have yet endeavour'd to do it to the Ladies, by acknowledging they are some of the most difficult as well as useful Questions we ever yet receiv'd.

Quest. 2. *Is the Soul of Woman inferiour to the Soul of Man? and if so, will his Superiority continue eternally?*

Ans. We think the difference much the same here, that 'tis between one Mans Soul and another, only accidental, from the different disposition of the Organs and Tone of the Body; or else from those opportunities of Improvement which some persons have more than others, or a more industrious inclination. As for Essential difference, there can be none, for then they must be perfectly distinct Creatures. However, there a superiority may arise from an accidental difference only, as we see in Birth, which is only an accident, and yet makes one Man a King, and many thousands else his Subjects — But then here's no Superiority in Souls, nay, very often there are many Subjects who excell their Prince in several real accomplishments. Thus in the Souls of Women, we see not but there are many of 'em as truly great, as brave, as learned, and as capable of any accomplishments as those of Men; and in Fact have managed Affairs as well, even when plac'd upon Thrones; for which reasons we believe there's no Essential difference between theirs and ours — But what there is depends only on their Bodies, and since we believe there will be no difference in them at the Resurrection, and that there will be nothing of Sex, any more than in the Angels, in those who neither marry, nor are given in Marriage, therefore we believe that what superiority there is shall not be eternal, but shall cease as soon as this Life is ended.

Quest. 3. *Who are wisest, those that Marry for Love, or for Convenience?*

Ans. There's no degree of Wisdom in either, but they are e'ne both Fools if they marry for one without t'other. Love without the necessary conveniences of Life, will soon wear thread-bare, and Conveniences without Love, is no better than being chain'd to a Post for the sake of a little meat, drink, and clothing. But if we compare the small degrees of each together, much Love, and moderate Convenience is far better than the most plentiful Estate with little or no Love.

Quest. 4. *A Lady that's extreamly troubled with Corns, desires to know the Reason?*

Ans. Alas poor Lady, there may be many weighty Reasons assign'd for this sore Calamity, some of which our Society will sooner light upon than all the Colledge. Perhaps her hard Heart has infected her Toes, and made 'em as obdurate as she her self; or else the little Wag Cupid is taking his Vengeance upon her, for having murder'd some of his humble Servants, and is turning her into Stone, for a Flinty-hearted Creature as she is, as his Cozen Apollo serv'd Niobe, and she is now dying upwards, as Daphne's poor Toes rooted in the Ground, and if she appeases not the little angry God the sooner, must in a few days more expect to be perfect Plaster of Paris all over.

POSTSCRIPT.

The Frenchman, amongst the Works of the Learned has crowded in 3 leaves of Scandal, a strange entertainment for the expectation of all wise and Good men. We shall by and by shew how grossly he accuses himself of all he has charged us with, and something more: the first is upon the Translation of our Supplements in some particulars, which pass'd the press without our review, as being done in haste, all which are easily mended with a Pen: we might oppose to this, that if we knew not better than what he wou'd persuade the World of, we have not abus'd the French Tongue half so much as he has the English Dialect: See his Vol. for October, p. 77. l. 16. p. 79. l. 1. p. 80. l. 12. ib. l. 23. and 24. &c. we shan't proceed to go farther, nor need we mention the Expressions, they are so silly and obvious. What he charges us next with, is such a reflection upon himself, that we know not whether to impute it to his Ignorance or Impudence: His words are these, But he, (i. e. Mr. N —) being a judicious Man, surely could not favour the Dissenters, (November's Abstracts p. 152. l. 26.) 'Tis natural enough for a Frenchman to act in Ecclesiasticks, as his old Master does in Politicks, i. e. Despotically, to sit judge upon all the World, and censure every Body that is not his profelyte; but 'tis a bold stroke to censure the wisdom of the best of Kings, the Piety and Honour of the present Bishops, nay, and above half of the Churchmen of England, because they have more Moderation and Goodness than a Mercenary, ignorant, malicious Frenchman, who we can prove guilty not only of D — but also of F — and shall do it if he reflects any further. He likewise has Scurrilous Reflections on the present Learned Author of the Universal Bibliothecque, (which any that knows what Kidney this Gentleman is of, will take but little notice of) but we need say no more as to that, for we expect that worthy Author will speedily speak for himself, and send us the full Character of this French Interloper, with the Reasons why he was continu'd no longer an assistant to Monsieur le Clerck. As to our English Account of Books, we are so far from reflecting upon Mr. N —, or any others, (for 'twou'd be strange if we should, we being our selves Members of the Church of England, as by Law establish'd,) any further than the words remark'd upon tend to the keeping up old Animosities, which should now be laid aside. However, he has now given us a fair and just occasion of answering the following Question lately sent us, viz. What are your Thoughts of that horrid Bigotry and Gallicism frequently found in the Frenchmans works, and of the brief and false account he gives of Books? In answer to which, we shall not only shew the notorious, false, and imperfect accounts he has given of almost every Book he has medled with, but also shall take off the Calumny from those worthy Persons he has abused, and set his whole performance in so true a light, that no man may be any further imposed on by him, tho' there seems to be no great occasion for this, his Book meeting with a very inconsiderable Sale, (to use his own Expression) and is now fallen from 1 s. to 6 d. (which 6 d. Book he not only makes a sheet less than formerly, but has fill'd 5 leaves of 't up with nothing else but Titles of Books, and envious Reflections upon the Dissenters, &c.) which evidently shews the slight Opinion the Learned have of this Gentlemans undertaking. And indeed 'twou'd be strange, if persons shou'd be so weary of their Money as to buy his false and brief Extracts of Books, when they'l always meet with the same Extracts largely and impartially done in our several following Supplements, besides an Alphabetical Table, which will comprehend not only the contents of our Young Students Library, but also of all our Mercuries and Supplements printed in the Year 91. His Baseness for offering to interfere with us in the Young Students Library, was so ill resented by all good and wise men that ever heard on't, that he has flung it up in silence; but had he attempted it, we shou'd have made it evident, that no man cou'd have subscribed to him but wou'd have bought the same Extracts twice.

The Poetical Character of this French Interloper, we reserve till he gives us further provocation.

But for a further account of this Frenchman, read the Preface to our 4th. Supplement, and our Proposals for the Young Students Library, (which will be revised by several MASTERS in the French Tongue) which are to be had at the Raven in the Poultry.